

DYOMERY

7/1/2005 085.0 hr(s)



Curios and Relics

Clothing

Dresses

Worn by Mary Lincoln

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

PHILADELPHIA



LINCOLN RELICS

Miss Ethel Hooper, of the Chicago Historical Society, garbed in a costume that Mrs. Lincoln wore and sitting in a rocking chair that once belonged to the Lincoln family.

2-12-70

VIRGINIA CARTER STUMBOUGH

1241 JUDSON AVENUE EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

October 10, 1946

Dear Dr. Warren,

Mary Lincoln

My great aunt, Miss Abigail Choate Keegan of Fort Wayne, writes that you have a small scrapbook of newspaper clippings about the gowns worn recently by the collectors of them, that you will be willing to lend me. I will be deeply grateful if you can send it to me, for as you know, I'm having a good deal of difficulty doing my research from home, and finding my facts so scattered and small in volume in any one place that I sometimes despair of doing a workmanlike job on the subject in a whole lifetime.

I've recently collected three anecdotes about Mary Todd Lincoln which I think you will be interested in, and want for your files. They were told me by Minna Schmidt, the costume specialist of Chicago who made all the historical women figurines in the State Historical Society building and in the Chicago Historical Society museum, and who formerly lectured on costume at the University of Chicago. She could not remember where she had learned the stories, but I have never read them before, and they may be unpublished. I'd like your opinion on their possible veracity. I'm checking the first with the Singer company in New York, and with local papers in Springfield.

1. The women of Springfield, Ill., wishing to give Mary Todd Lincoln a parting gift when she left for Washington after her husband was elected president, collected \$600 and spent it on the latest table model sewing machine, probably a Singer since that was probably the only widely sold model at that time.

2. Before she left for Washington, Mrs. Lincoln visited a dry goods merchant and chose all the prettiest patterns for new dresses. Her dressmaker protested when she saw them that the prettiest of all, sprigged with tiny pink roses, had been laid aside by the merchant's wife, who swore that Mrs. Lincoln shouldn't have it, that after she was gone, the merchant's wife would get it out and have a dress made for herself of it. She had wrapped it in paper and hidden it without her husband's knowledge in the bottom drawer of the bureau in her bedroom. When Abe came home that night, Mary met him with a demand that he go to the merchant's house and get the material for her. He refused, and was so upset at the ruckus that he went to be without supper. However, in the morning he thought better of it, and rising early, went to the man's door. The merchant came to the door, and on Abe's telling him what he wanted, swore his wife had no such material, or he would have known of it. Abe suggested that he look in the bottom drawer of his wife's bureau. He did, his wife not waking, and he brought the package to Abe and told him he was sorry, and Mr. Lincoln was welcome to it. The latter

VIRGINIA CARTER STUMBOUGH

1241 JUDSON AVENUE EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

asked him please to send the bill to his office rather than his home, then carried it off to the office with him. That night he took it home and surprised Mary with the gift of the pattern she wanted so badly.

3. Robert Lincoln on one occasion, attending a Lincoln's birthday banquet before he left Chicago, shook his head occasionally all through the many eulogies in the speeches about his father. Later he spoke to the woman at his side, saying, "My father! Always my father? That's fine, but why don't they speak of my mother, too?" Mrs. Schmidt mentioned the name of the woman to whom he spoke, who told her the story, but I didn't take that down, and it may be that Mrs. Schmidt was not at liberty to give her name.

I'm looking forward to seeing the scrapbook, and will take the best of care of it and return it to you promptly. Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Virginia Stumbough

(Mrs. H. D. Stumbough)

P.S. I have located five original dresses; do you know of others? One in the Washington National Museum; two in the Chicago Historical Society Museum; two in the possession of Mrs. Dona also in Springfield. O. C. S.

October 16, 1946

Mrs. H.D. Stumbough
1241 Judson Avenue
Evanston, Illinois

Dear Mrs. Stumbough:

You will please find attached to this letter such clippings as we have been able to assemble on the subject in which you are interested.

While it is not our custom here to circulate the material on Lincoln which we have gathered, but because of your former Fort Wayne association we are loaning you such items as we feel will be helpful in your research.

Of course we shall have to ask that they be returned just as soon as you are finished with them because we can never tell when someone else waiting on the same line will come here for information contained in our files.

When I tell you we have over one hundred thousand clippings organized under various subjects you can visualize the tremendous lot of material which is available.

Very truly yours,

LAW:EB
Enc.

Director

30 sheets Enclosed

200 types

Mrs. Lincoln's Clothing

by

JEANNIE H. JAMES

and

WAYNE C. TEMPLE



Reprinted from LINCOLN HERALD, Summer, 1960

250 Copies

Chicago Sun-Times
Chicago, Illinois
February 8, 1963



At the Chicago Historical Society, Mrs. Howard Linn found Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt's blue brocade inaugural gown "too snug in the midriff, but fun to dress up in."



Waiting to go onstage in the "First Lady" fashion tableau are Mrs. Harper Richards, in Mrs. William McKinley's white satin appliqued with lace and pearls, and Mrs. Philip D. Armour Jr. wearing Mrs. Rutherford B. Hayes' inaugural gown with heavily beaded jacket. The gowns will go on display to the public Friday at the Historical Society. (Sun-Times Photos by Carmen Reporto)



Martha McCormick's impersonation of Mrs. Abraham Lincoln, in pansy purple velvet, was authentic from her white shortie gloves and fan to her hairdo.

Chi. Sun-Times Feb 8, 1963

EXHIBITS

ILLINOIS

FRANZ KLINE: BLACK AND WHITE 1950-1961

Through June 4, 1995, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. The exhibition of 35 paintings and 15 works on paper traces Kline's development within his classic period. The essential innovations and achievements of Kline's black-and-white palette are recognized as a distinct body of work that grew rapidly out of his figurative work of the late 1940s. Call 312-280-2671.

INDIANA

TIMELESS BEAUTY: CONNER PRAIRIE FURNITURE

Through June 4, 1995, Conner Prairie. Discover the variety and intricacies in this selection from Conner Prairie's nineteenth century collection, many never before shown in public, as well as pieces from the new "Conner Prairie Collection by National/Mt. Airy." Learn about furniture construction, and see how furniture was used in period settings. Call 317-776-6000.

OHIO

FOCUS: FIBER, APRIL 19 - JUNE 18, 1995, THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART.

This annual juried exhibition of works by members of The Textile Art Alliance, Cleveland, encompasses many fiber techniques including paper casting, plaiting, batik, embroidery, reed weaving and wrapping, as well as the more traditional weaving, dyeing, knitting, quilting and applique. Call 216-421-7340.

THE ROAD TO FITNESS: AN OLYMPIC JOURNEY

Through May 31, the Health Museum in Cleveland. Visitors can go for the gold as they learn about fitness and health.

MICHIGAN

FIRST LADIES GOWNS

Through April 30, the Gerald R. Ford Museum, Grand Rapids, MI.



First Ladies Gowns ~ Coolidge, Polk & Lincoln (left to right)
photo courtesy staff photographer Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

PROGRAMS

ILLINOIS

NATURE'S FURY & WATER WORKS, CHICAGO ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

March 25-June 10. Build a dam at a water table; experience a tornado. Contact 312-549-0606.

IOWA

MAKE IT MOVE, THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM, BETTENDORF

Visitors are welcome to experience the mechanics of motion and how simple machines make things move in this exhibit from the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. Contact 319-344-4106.

MICHIGAN

BACKYARD MONSTERS: GIGANTIC ROBOTIC INSECTS AND KIN

At the Lakeview Square Mall in Battle Creek, coordinated by the Kalamazoo Nature Center and with assistance from the Kingman Museum. March 11 through April 9. From the producers of E.T. comes an exhibit of huge animatronic insects, some up to 96 times their normal size, including a praying mantis, carpenter ants and an unicorn beetle, all bigger than a Volkswagen Bug. The exhibit shows the relationships between all members of a specific ecosystem, including creatures often portrayed as pests. Included are 14 interactive education stations designed to teach creative play. Contact 616-381-1574.

LEGISLATION!

TELECOMMUNICATION REFORM

We must mobilize our grassroots network to inform Congress that schools, museums and libraries are logical providers, not simply consumers, of educational and public information on the superhighway. We must let Congress know that schools, museum and libraries, as is evident in partnership being formed under Goals 2000 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, are pooling their resources in new efforts to educate America's children and adults. The information superhighway is the ultimate tool in our attainment of these goals. In return for deregulation, it is essential that the industry help make access to the superhighway possible for these public and nonprofit educational institutions.

If you would like talking points to use in your letters, please call AAM Government Affairs at 202-289-9125 for a copy of our Telecommunications Policy statement.

OUTSIDE ADVERTISING IN THIRD-CLASS PUBLICATIONS

The postal service has attempted to ban most advertising from third-class nonprofit publications, especially third part advertising. All material mailed under the third-class rate could refer only to products and services substantially related to the mission of the mailing institution. In September, President Clinton signed into law HR 4539, legislation that makes appropriations to the treasury, postal service and general government for FY 1995. Included in the law was an amendment which clarifies the original intent of Congress and allows nonprofits to continue accepting outside advertising.

IOWA

▲ Construction of a new \$5.8 million facility for the **Children's Museum** and the **Center for the Cultural Arts** in Bettendorf was approved by voters in a public referendum on November 8, 1994. The two institutions, departments of the City of Bettendorf, will be merged into one organization offering exhibits and programming in the arts and sciences. Construction of the new facility will begin in spring, 1995 with completion planned in early 1997. This project increases exhibit space 60%; it includes a performance stage, classrooms and a science park. Design is by Tim Downing Architects, Bettendorf, and Jackson Ryan Architects, Houston.

PUBLICATIONS

INTERNET RESOURCES FOR MUSEUM, LIBRARY, AND ARCHIVES PERSONNEL: PART 1, #72

The latest technical leaflet published by the Illinois Heritage Association. The leaflet describes strategies for getting on the Internet, a list of approximately 52 discussion groups of interest to people working in museums and instructions on how to subscribe. Contact the Indiana Historical Society Local History Services, 315 W. Ohio Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202, tel. 317-232-4591.

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS EXHIBITIONS PROGRAM 1994-95

The AFA announces the publication of The American Federation of Arts Exhibitions Program 1994-95 catalogue with full descriptions of thirty currently available fine arts and media arts exhibitions. These offerings comprise a full range of alternatives that meet the diverse programming needs of museums and visual arts centers across the country. For your complimentary copy, please call Museum Services at 800-AFA-0270, ext. 39.

THE 1994 SURVEY OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM FIELD

Available this spring, free of charge, through support from the Ford Foundation and the Institute of Museum Services (IMS) Professional Services grant program. For a copy or more information contact Jocelyn Robinson-Hubbuch at 513-376-4611.

MUSEUM SOURCE

The second edition of MUSEUM Source, a national directory of museum products and services available on a complimentary basis, is now available. MUSEUM Source, created in 1992, reaches 8000 museum purchasers and represents over 100 vendors in six major categories - Collections, Exhibit Support, Electronic Communications, Operations, Education/Interpretation and Promotion/Development. For inclusion or copies, contact Sharon Kayne Chaplock, MUSEUM Source, P.O. Box 13096, Milwaukee, WI 53213, tel. 414-778-1998.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION: A HANDBOOK FOR MUSEUMS AND OTHER CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Written by Joan Kuyper with Ellen Hirzy and Kathleen Huftalen. Has been cited as a useful tool in volunteer management. Sponsored by the American Association of Museum Volunteers (AAMV) with the generous support of the Marpat Foundation, the handbook was published by the American Council for the Arts. It is available for \$14.95 to AAM members or \$16.95 to non-members, plus \$4.00 handling, from the AAM Bookstore, tel. 202-289-9127, fax 202-289-6578.

STEAL THIS HANDBOOK!

Serves as a template from which museums can create their own emergency preparedness plans. Prepared by the Southern Registrars Association, the 250-page, spiral-

continued on page 5

CONSTRUCTION

OHIO

- ▲ **The Great Lakes Science Center** in Cleveland, scheduled to open in the summer of 1996, will feature over 400 exhibits designed to encourage dynamic learning, stimulate curiosity and promote hands-on, interactive inquiry.
- ▲ Board members of the **Lake Erie Islands Historical Society** in Put-in-Bay recently approved a museum enhancement and expansion project and initiated a capital campaign drive to fund the plans. The proposed new, climate-controlled building, across the courtyard from the present museum building, will provide additional exhibit and office space, a gift shop, small kitchen, and public lavatory.

WISCONSIN

- ▲ The **Oshkosh Public Museum** celebrates its reopening May 7 with the exhibit "*Through the Eye of the Needle: The Story of OshKosh B'Gosh*". The year-long exhibit examines the company's role in local history and the national garment industry. The museum, in the Edgar Sawyer Home, suffered extensive damage in a June, 1994 fire. Because it is in a National Register district, the exterior has been returned to its original 1907 appearance. The interior, however, was redesigned to make excellent use of every square foot and energy conserving materials.

...publication cont'd

bound handbook covers all aspects of emergency preparedness, response and recovery, and includes both major disasters and everyday, potentially dangerous situations. Cost is \$25 for non-SERA members. For more information, call Michele Baker at 803-737-4954.

MUSEUM VIEWS

Museum Views is a quarterly newsletter for small and mid-sized art museums. The winter, 1995 issue focuses on fund raising, noting that "the raising of private and corporate funds becomes even more crucial to the well being of our cultural institutions" given the Republicans' sweep in the November elections. A sampling of the contents: "In Pursuit of Generation X", "Polls Reveal Swings in Giving", "Recognition to Volunteers/Donors", and "Women as Donors". Contact Museum Views at 2 Peter Cooper Road, New York, NY, 10010, tel. 212-677-3415. Arts Money: Raising It, Saving It, and Earning It, by Joan Jeffri, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis) a discussion of fund raising and how it should be incorporated into other financial and management activities. An explanation of how to generate income from sources other than private contributions and government grants.

CORRECTION to the Directory of Exhibitors, Sponsors and Advertisers in the November/December News Brief: the 800 number for Archivart is 800-804-8428.

In Memory

MMC offer condolences to Polly Jontz and family. Polly's husband, Leland, died March 21, 1995.

...cincinnati cont'd

completed a \$10 million renovation of its Romanesque building in Eden Park, will be our hosts on Thursday after a full day of sessions.

Friday evening, the Contemporary Arts Center and the Taft Museum will host an after-hours gallery walk. The CAC gained an international reputation in 1990, when it became the first U.S. museum to be tried upon (and subsequently acquitted of) obscenity charges for opening an exhibition of photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe.

The Taft Museum once was the home of Charles and Anna Sinton Taft (Charles was

...tips cont'd

HOW TO ASSESS YOUR MARKETING PROGRAM.

Begin with your mission. Are the marketing goals of your museum a clear extension of the mission?

- ▲ Is the implementation of marketing strategies feasible in terms of the museum's resources and marketplace opportunities? Are resources optimally allocated to ensure that the museum's message successfully reaches its publics?
- ▲ Is publicity, advertising and promotion appropriately placed to reach the primary market?
- ▲ Are the museum's products (exhibits, programs, events, merchandise) and services (membership, admissions, information, store) of the highest quality?
- ▲ Are marketing personnel part of the team that determines what and how products and services offered to the public?

A market is created by providing products and services that meet the real needs and wants of the public, and providing them better than anyone else. Identifying marketplace forces that affect profitability, concentrating on the museum's strengths, establishing clear marketing objectives and implementing strategies that capitalizes on those strengths adds up to a successful marketing program.

TO ACHIEVE YOUR MARKETING GOALS ASK YOURSELF:

- ▲ Does my museum gather and evaluate essential information about its publics? Do we know who is coming and who is not coming to our museum and why?
- ▲ Do we know what lifestyle, demographic and economic changes are taking place within the marketplace that could affect our attendance and our funding? What do we need to do to positively influence our position with visitors, members, donors and educators?
- ▲ Do we know who makes up the museum's major market segments? How old are they, where do they live, what is their average income, size of family and educational level? What is the current size and potential rate of growth of this market? How will this market effect our attendance and contributions?
- ▲ What do our current and potential public think of our products and services? Why do they visit our museum, or why aren't more people visiting our museum?
- ▲ What about the competition? Who are they? What is their market share? What are their marketing strategies? Are they reaching our audience better than we are?
- ▲ Are our marketing strategies well-conceived to capitalize on our strengths? Are we using public relations to the best of our ability? Is our advertising appropriately placed? Are we really getting the best 'bang for our buck'?
- ▲ Is our publicity, advertising and promotion creative and competitive? Are the appropriate markets covered by our publicity and advertising? Do we have the resources to compete?
- ▲ Finally, how successful is our total marketing program in relation to the public's response?

If your marketing strategies are not working, then, like exhibits and programs, they must be modified, some possibly eliminated altogether. Just as exhibits, programs and events must meet certain criteria, so must marketing. Today's new reality demands that products and services and their promotion must be profitable. Marketing strategies must be developed from the standpoint of profitability.

No single factor contributes more to the museum's long-term growth than good marketing practices coupled with excellent products fully supported by management. Based upon your museum's market research, marketing strategies, resources and promotional mix, is the public more aware of your museum than they were two years ago? Has attendance risen or contributions increased? Evaluating your museum's marketing performance now will have a major impact on how you answer these questions a year from now.

-Mary Kay Ingenebren

the president's brother), who were dedicated supporters of the arts. In 1927, the Tafts gave to the people of Cincinnati their home, their personal art collection and a million-dollar endowment for its maintenance. In the 1840s, Robert Duncanson, noted African American artist and protégé of Nicholas Longworth, the city's first millionaire, painted landscape murals that decorate the entry hall of the house. The Duncanson murals are undergoing conservation. Observers are welcome during normal museum hours.

For more information on these and other Cincinnati attractions call 1-800-CINCY-USA. For info about the annual meeting, call Ruby Rogers at 513-287-7080, David

Johnson at 513-241-0343 or fax 513-241-7762, or Esther Hockett at 314-454-3110.

JUST THE FACTS

MMC Annual Meeting

- Place: Cincinnati, OH
- Dates: September 19-23, 1995
- Registration: \$95, plus evening events at \$15-\$25, and special workshops to be announced
- Hotel: Omni Netherland Plaza: \$95 and \$105.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

MAJOR GIFTS: SEVEN FACES OF PHILANTHROPY

A two-day workshop with several locations and dates, offers a framework for understanding affluent donors' motivations and expectations after making a gift. Contact The Fund Raising School, Indiana Center on Philanthropy, 550 W. North Street, Suite 301, Indianapolis, IN 46202-3162, 800-962-6692. 1.4 CEUs. Registration is \$495.

IL - MUSEUMS AND MORE: COOPERATIVE VENTURES FOR LIBRARIES, SCHOOLS, MUSEUMS, HISTORICAL SOCIETIES, CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

April 11, Champaign, IL. The event will feature exhibits highlighting innovative educational programs developed by museum, school and library personnel. Resource materials - funding sources, sample educational program materials and creative program ideas - will be available. Contact Pat Miller, 217-359-5600.

MIDWEST ARCHIVES CONFERENCE

May 4-11, 1995, Midland Hotel, Chicago, IL. Topics include Photographic Collection Management, Ethics and the World-Wide Web. Contact Stephen Carvell, Kraft Foods, Inc., Archives, 6350 Kirk Street, Morton Grove, IL 60053, 708-646-2980.

MN - PRESERVATION MICROFILMING

April 24-26, 1995, Luther Seminary Library, St. Paul, MN. This Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) program trains project administrators in research institutions to plan, implement and manage filming projects. It is not a technical training program. Cost is \$190, limited to 15 participants. Contact Gail Pfeifle, NEDCC, 100 Brickstone Square, Andover, MA 01810-1492, tel. 508-470-1010.

MO - AASLH WORKSHOPS. MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

St. Louis, will host two workshops back-to-back. In "Collections Care and Management," May 8-10, presenters will provide practical information on collections management policies, record keeping, computerization, storage considerations and basic issues. Early registration deadline is April 10. In "Exhibits for Historical Agencies" workshop, May 11-12, participants will study MHS exhibits including the acclaimed "St. Louis in the Gilded Age." Attention will be given to adapting exhibits techniques to the budgets of small history organizations. April 13 is the early registration deadline. Early registration is \$125; late registration is \$175. Student rates are \$95 and \$145.

The fee includes materials, refreshment breaks, and one box lunch. Workshops are limited to the first 30 paid participants. Through special arrangements with AASLH, the AASLH membership requirement for registration is waived for MMC members. Contact AASLH at 615-255-2971.

WI - TRAINING FOR FIRE AND FLOOD COLLECTIONS RECOVERY

April 27-28, 1995, The Neville Public Museum, Green Bay. This workshop is designed to train staff and volunteers to make informed choices about immediate artifact care, give them experience in handling wet and fire-damaged collection materials, and provide practical experience preparing materials for freezing or freeze-drying. Co-sponsors with the Neville Museum are The Upper Midwest Conservation Association and the Bush Foundation. Contact Susan Talbot-Stanaway at the Neville, tel. 414-448-4460.

DEVELOPING INTERACTIVE EXHIBITS FOR SMALL MUSEUMS: CLUES FOR SUCCESS, WISCONSIN FEDERATION OF MUSEUMS WORKSHOP

June 12, 1995, Appleton, WI, tel. 414-730-8204.

ELSEWHERE - STRENGTHENING YOUR FUND RAISING USING COLLECTIONS CARE: STRATEGIES FOR LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES

April 25, 1995, Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC), Andover, MA. Cosponsored by the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property (NIC) and NEDCC, the one-day workshop will demonstrate how institutions can take creative approaches to incorporating preservation and conservation into fund-raising activities. Collections care can be an effective tool for raising money and invigorating a fund-raising program. The collections care program and the institution in general will benefit from these new methods. Registration is \$45. Contact Gail Pfeifel, tel. 508-470-1010.

CAPITALIZING ON COLLECTIONS CARE

Philadelphia Marriott, May 20, immediately preceding AAM. This workshop will demonstrate how museums can creatively incorporate collections care, conservation and preservation into fund-raising activities. Sponsored by the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property (NIC) and the Development and Membership Committee (DAM) of AAM. Cost is \$100 with limited discounts available. Contact Kristen Overbeck at the NIC, tel. 202-625-1495.

INTRODUCTION TO MANAGING MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

April 24-28, 1995, Washington, DC, offered by the Smithsonian Institution's Office of Museum Programs. Contact the Office of Museum Programs at A&I Building, Suite 2235-MRC 427, Smithsonian Institution, DC: fax 202-357-3346.

MISSION 2000: EMBRACING THE CHALLENGE, THE MUSEUM STORE ASSOCIATION'S 40TH ANNUAL MEETING

April 29-May 3, 1995, Pittsburgh, PA. Call the MSA Fax on Demand Line, 508-230-2051 and select document #51010.

WORLD HERITAGE AND MUSEUMS EXHIBITION AND SYMPOSIUM

May 2-5, 1995, London, England. For more information call James Thompson at 303-586-6309 or contact Joanna Brown at international 011-41-1886-833505 or fax 011-41-1886-833144.

HERITAGE TOURISM: IS IT FOR YOU?, CUSTOMER SERVICE AT MUSEUMS?!, AND MUSEUM COMMUNICATIONS: GET YOUR MESSAGE RIGHT

Workshops offered in Memphis, TN; Tampa, FL; and Cincinnati, OH and other location in May and June. For more information contact Susan M. Ward, Director, Heritage Communications, 211 Glenstone Circle, Brentwood, TN 37027, tel 615-661-6336.

MUSEUMS EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

May 21-25, 1995, Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia. The American Association of Museums (AAM) 90th annual meeting focuses on many of the challenges the United States faces in the 21st century that involve education. Contact the AAM Meetings Department, 202-289-9113.

CLAIMING OWNERSHIP: OUR ART, OUR HISTORY, OUR MUSEUMS.

The African American Museums Association (AAMA) will hold its 17th annual conference August 24-26, 1995 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Tampa, FL, hosted by the Museum of African American Art in Tampa. Contact Jocelyn Robinson-Hubbuch, tel. 513-376-4611, fax 513-376-2007 or write AAMA, P.O. Box 548, Wilberforce, OH 45384.

DEVELOPING AND MANAGING LIVING HISTORY PROGRAMS: A WORKSHOP FOR TRIBAL MUSEUMS

June 26-29, 1995, Cherokee National Museum, Tahlequah, OK. Tribal museums and cultural centers who wish to examine

Mary Lincoln's Original 'Strawberry Dress'

April 25, 2011 [James Cornelius](#) [1 comment](#)

Oddly, no photograph seems to exist of Mary Lincoln in her 5 March 1861 First Inaugural gown. Were she and the household too busy, were the photographic studios too full of newly minted government workers as a new administration came to town?

Instead, we know that Mary Lincoln wore the strawberry dress in her first spring as First Lady, in 1861. We know that someone in one of Mathew Brady's two studios took her picture in it. Two questions arise: Why this dress; and where did she pose?

The tradition of a 'strawberry party' had been around for at least a generation in Springfield, Illinois, by the time the Lincolns moved to Washington in February 1861. Such parties were held in hundreds of towns throughout what is now the eastern portion of the United States, and so too were raspberry parties. In central Illinois the season for fresh wild strawberries begins in May, while around Washington it might begin a little earlier. Mary and Abraham once hosted such a party for Springfield families and friends, and they attended other such events. A carriage ride into the country with a picnic lunch – the "young people" (teenagers) usually riding in a separate carriage – provided entertainment, exercise, and sociability.

So among the novel, "Western" ideas Mary Lincoln imported to the nation's capital was to continue the parties even while war loomed. This accorded with her husband's wishes that, to name two, the Executive Mansion be freshened up and the Capitol dome be completed. She took along her cousin Lizzie Grimsley to shop in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia in early May.

It seems most likely that she bought this beautiful black-silk dress, with machine-embroidered strawberry sprigs, in one of those cities. A reporter for a Democratic paper followed her in New York one day to record her extravagances, but this dress was not mentioned. And with her pretty young cousin along, she could well have stopped at Brady's photographic studio, 10th St. and Broadway, for what we believe was her first formal pose as First Lady. Why this dress? Perhaps it reminded her, and others around her, of their traditions in Illinois. There is also an outside chance that it was made in Chicago before their journey, or made there and shipped to Washington for her.

Three copies of the cdv I have examined all read 'Brady / New York,' but Lloyd Ostendorf's 1963 book of Lincoln family photographs presumes that Mary sat in Brady's studio on Pennsylvania Ave. in Washington. If Ostendorf is right, then Brady may have used the card to let New Yorkers know of his *coup d'arte* of being the first to capture the new First Lady on chemically treated glass. Brady was known to advertise each studio in the other city this way. But if Ostendorf is wrong, Mary actually sat in New York, where she more likely acquired the dress.

Mary's other Lizzie, the dressmaker and confidante Elizabeth Keckly, can not be shown to have worked on the strawberry dress. Though the two women met on 5 March, the day after Lincoln's swearing in, we do not know exactly when and to what extent she began working for the new First Lady. In her memoir *Behind the Scenes* (1868), she claimed to have made dozens of dresses for Mrs. Lincoln right from the start. We can suppose that Lizzie Keckly at least helped Mary get into the dress and perhaps altered it slightly for her.

Mary gave the strawberry dress and a summer 1861 gown to her cousin Lizzie. The latter is now in the Smithsonian, the former is in Springfield, both of them through Grimsley descendants – the only intact Mary

Lincoln dresses in existence now. Donna McCrea's book *Fashionable First Lady: The Victorian Wardrobe of Mary Lincoln* (2007) is the best study of all of her gowns, but she is unable to specify its origins, either. So in an unusual twist of the common historical pattern, today we know the provenance of the strawberry dress since 1861, but we do not know the point of origin of either the dress or the photo.



Mary's original strawberry dress will be on display in the Presidential Museum from Friday May 6th through Sunday May 8th for Mother's Day – its first showing in 26 years.



